



FEMA

Texas Severe Storms TX-4332-DR *Media Analysis Report/Morning Edition* *September 18, 2017*

Hot Issues

- None

News Clips Analysis/Trends

- Housing is becoming a major issue as cities and FEMA struggle to shelter thousands displaced by Hurricane Harvey. A KIII-TV report focuses on housing scarcity in hard-hit Corpus Christi and FEMA's reassurance that they haven't been forgotten. Hundreds of evacuees still remain in shelters.
- Flood insurance continues at a steady pace with survivors voicing frustration over receiving claims. The number of stories are increasing as survivors return home.
- Volunteers from all walks of life continue to lend a helping hand to those struggling with recovery. Holding fundraisers, repairing homes and businesses, and helping find homes for displaced animals are the primary topics of the daily reports.
- Steady coverage of Hurricane Irma continues with the latest on Irma destroying 25 percent of homes in the Florida Keys.

Social Media Analysis

Hurricane Harvey – Social Listening Report – 9/18/17 0800 CST

Compiled by: Bree Constance Huffman & Scott Reuter

This report is being distributed to the 4332 Joint Field Office, FEMA External Affairs at Headquarters and Region 6, FEMA Office of Response and Recovery, Red Cross, USCG, and HHS/ASPR.

Summary: Social media activity for this reporting period is relatively low, which is normal for the end of the weekend and early Monday morning. Sentiment is neutral to negative.

This report compiled by Julie Foster, Julie.Foster@fema.dhs.gov

Summary of Coverage

- FEMA assures there are plans for recovery in Coastal Bend despite trailers being sold
- Officials working to close Austin mega-shelter; 115 evacuees still remain
- Hurricane evacuees being housed in Dallas shelter
- Bilingual event supplies answers and living essentials to survivors
- Rep. Randy Weber promises FEMA aid to survivors but says it will take time
- Disaster Recovery Centers open in Galveston and Nueces counties
- FEMA registrations approaching 5000 in Wharton County
- Facebook Live question and answer session set with FEMA rep
- Long road ahead for undocumented immigrants in wake of Harvey
- Disaster unemployment assistance available to survivors
- Unemployment aid slow in coming to survivors forced out of work by Harvey
- Tourism in Port Aransas in question in Harvey aftermath
- Harvey's insured losses to cost \$19 billion
- Net claims of \$150 million from Harvey estimated by special insurer
- Sandy survivors warn Harvey, Irma survivors about insurance nightmares
- Port Arthur Mayor puts his city first
- Flood-devastated Dickinson looking for donations
- Magic Johnson and Stevie Wonder donate relief supplies to Houston Survivors
- Kansas college students lending helping hand to hurricane survivors
- Renee Zellweger helping to find homes for Houston animals
- Dogs displaced by Harvey now in New York City
- Houston homeless dogs and cats move to central California coast
- Social Media

Notable Quotes

"If you just take a look around now, you can see everyone is working hard. Everyone's working all day, every day trying to get stuff done.... We have a town. It's beautiful and it's our home, despite the tourism or not. It's still our home and everyone's going to put it back together."- Peyton Lytle, Port Aransas resident

"It's like moving out without having a place to go." – Marlene Simhaeuser, Houston resident

"It's been unbelievable. The water may be gone but Harvey recovery will be going on for a long time. Arguably, District 14 is ground zero for Harvey flooding." – TX Congressman Randy Weaver

"It's been a struggle. I've been worrying how I'm going to pay the bills. How am I going to get everything straightened up?"- Wanda Huth, Schroeder resident

Headlines

[**FEMA working to help Coastal Bend recover**](#)

[**New plea for bottled water, canned goods as Austin mega shelter remains open**](#)

[**Hurricane Harvey Evacuees Seek Shelter In Dallas**](#)

[**Bilingual recovery fair helps provide fresh start for Harvey victims**](#)

[**Weber promises aid for region after Harvey**](#)

[**Disaster Recovery Centers to Open in Galveston and Nueces Counties**](#)

[**FEMA registrations near 5,000 in county**](#)

[**Live Q&A session with FEMA representative**](#)

[**We Are Human Beings Like Everyone Else'**](#)

[**Disaster Unemployment Assistance Available To Residents**](#)

[**Unemployment Aid Coming Too Slowly To Help People Forced From Work By Harvey**](#)

[**Port Aransas feels economic pinch after Hurricane Harvey**](#)

[**Social Media**](#)

NFIP and Flood Maps

[**Harvey's Insured Losses Estimated To Cost Nearly \\$19 Billion**](#)

[**Hiscox sees \\$150 million net claims from Hurricane Harvey**](#)

[**Sandy Survivors Warn Harvey And Irma Victims About What's Ahead**](#)

Volunteers/Donations/Charities

[**Long road to recovery for Dickinson after Hurricane Harvey**](#)

[**Magic Johnson and Stevie Wonder donate relief supplies for Harvey victims**](#)

[**Baker students do their part to help Hurricane Harvey victims**](#)

Displaced Animals

[**Renee Zellweger helping Houston animals after Harvey**](#)

[**Adorable Future Roommate Alert: These Good Dogs Displaced By Hurricane Harvey Are Now In NYC**](#)

[**Homeless Dogs And Cats From Hurricane Harvey In Houston Move To South, Central Coasts**](#)

Stories

[**FEMA working to help Coastal Bend recover**](#)

[KIII-TV, Corpus Christi, TX](#)

Briana Whitney, KIII 10:42 PM. CDT

September 17, 2017

CORPUS CHRISTI - More than 100 FEMA trailers were auctioned off just days before Hurricane Harvey hit Texas.

Now, the agency is dealing with a shortage of housing for everyone displaced from both Harvey and Hurricane Irma.

FEMA said the trailers had to go because they had been previously used, but where does that leave those who now have no homes here in the coastal bend?

Kiii Reporter Briana Whitney reports.

Many will need government housing for months, even years.

That's why many were surprised when FEMA confirmed they auctioned off over 100 of their mobile trailers just days before Harvey hit.

FEMA representative Paul Corah said about the sold homes, "The toilets don't work anymore, they're broken or the showers don't work anymore they need to be safe for people to live in."

The sold trailers were used last year in Baton Rouge during the city's severe flooding.

It was decided they were too worn down to re-purpose.

That left their fleet at only 1,700 trailers, a very small number for the thousands who lost homes in both Harvey and Irma.

Normally FEMA workers would stay at local hotels and motels but all of those here in the Coastal Bend are filled with people who have been displaced from their homes being destroyed.

So all of those FEMA workers are staying in temporary tents.

A long-term plan for housing that will be locally controlled and run by the State.

FEMA has put out bids for 4,500 new trailers, but those aren't ready yet.

In the meantime, they're working on opening schools and businesses around the area and urging everyone to be patient, even though it's difficult.

[New plea for bottled water, canned goods as Austin mega shelter remains open](#) **[KXAN-TV, Austin, TX](#)**

September 17, 2017

AUSTIN – The Austin Disaster Relief Network and the Central Texas Food Bank issued an urgent plea Saturday for more bottled water and canned food donations to help with Hurricane Harvey recovery.

They will be accepting those donations at a free two-day Harvey Benefit concert happening until 11 p.m. Saturday night and then continuing on Sunday from noon to 9 p.m. It's being held at the Moontower Saloon at 10212 Manchaca Road in South Austin.

"It's natural for all of us to want to do something when a disaster hits," said Lucas Cook, Austin musician and concert organizer. "As Texas musicians, we have a duty to bring people together and use our talents for the greater good. Come on out and enjoy the music and support a very good cause."

Austin mega-shelter remains open

Austin's mega-shelter for Hurricane evacuees remained open on Saturday, said a city spokesperson.

He said that there were still 115 people taking refuge there.

Officials are working to close the shelter. Earlier this week, buses took some of the evacuees to Houston or Victoria.

The city said they will try their best to find housing for remaining people. If they can't, they will not close the shelter.

Port Arthur evacuees find shelter in tents

About 250 tents have been put up in the parking lot in Port Arthur, Texas, as FEMA and county officials work on a long-term housing solution.

Each tent can house up to 14 people. Men and women will be separated, and families will be kept together. The mayor said he expects more evacuees to return to Port Arthur from Dallas and Garland and stay in the tents.

"We are finally finding a balance after a couple weeks, and we are happy people will be safe and comfortable here," said Port Arthur Mayor Derrick Freeman.

The mayor said the tents are temporary shelters where people can stay for about 30 days. But he said that could be extended.

Hurricane Harvey Evacuees Seek Shelter In Dallas

KFDW-TV, Dallas, TX

September 17, 2017

The Walnut Hill Rec Center is being used to house many evacuees with volunteers setting up over 500 cots.

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/video/category/news/3720654-hurricane-harvey-evacuees-seek-shelter-in-dallas/>

Bilingual recovery fair helps provide fresh start for Harvey victims

Houston Chronicle

By Katherine Blunt

September 16, 2017

Maria Julia Tamayo swiped through photos on her phone and pointed to the screen, using it to bridge a language barrier as she explained how she lost it all.

In the image, the top of her vehicle barely breached the surface of the floodwater that had risen outside the garage of her one-story home near the Addicks Reservoir. Four feet of water seeped into the house when Hurricane Harvey swamped Houston with record rainfall.

Had she saved anything?

"Nada," she said. Nothing.

Tamayo, who speaks only Spanish, found a large group of multilingual volunteers who helped her apply for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance Saturday at a disaster recovery fair for flood-battered residents in a diverse area of Houston. Hundreds of people showed up at a shopping center on Highway 6 for free food, cleaning supplies and information on how to get financial aid to rebuild or replace what the storm had destroyed.

The effort united dozens of businesses and nonprofits at an unlikely venue: Track 21, a go-kart complex with laser tag and miniature golf. The Red Cross, the Houston Food Bank, the West Houston Church of Christ and many other groups set up tables and tents in the parking lot, and go-kart racers whipped around indoor tracks as FEMA representatives took applications.

A team of 75 volunteers from General Electric and Baker Hughes wore tags that stated their language skills: Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, French, Italian. Some had spent hours writing multilingual tip sheets for applying for federal aid online.

Helpful translators

Adriana Garcia, who speaks Spanish and French, spent the morning talking to non-English speakers who hadn't been aware of the types of aid available. At one point, she helped a family that needed Spanish and Spanish sign language translation explain their situation to FEMA workers.

"A lot of people who really need help don't have access to the information," she said.

FEMA representative Carmen Rodriguez also switched between English and Spanish as she explained aid qualifications to dozens of residents. She talked at length to a family that had for days lived in a mold-ridden house, unaware the agency could place them somewhere else.

"Many people don't know what assistance is available," she said.

The relief effort targeted a devastated area of the city where homeowners haven't finished gutting their houses. Parts of the Bear Creek Pioneers Park are shimmering three weeks after the Addicks Reservoir overflowed, and growing piles of debris and trash mark where the floodwater had risen.

Many shopping centers and businesses remain closed, challenging residents to find nearby food and supplies. The Fiesta Mart at Highway 6 and Clay took on 10 feet of water in the depths of the storm, and the company is assessing how long it will take to reopen.

Johanna Schroeder, an event organizer, expected to help as many as 500 people from a wide range of economic backgrounds. She encouraged them all to seek aid from FEMA and other organizations, regardless of how much or how little they had lost.

"Some people who don't have kitchens have never had to ask for anything in their lives," she said. "It's a complex situation I've never encountered before."

First time for aid

Marlene Simshauser teared up after applying for FEMA assistance, something she had never done. Her home near the Addicks flooded during the storm for the first time in 35 years, and her insurance won't cover the full cost of the damage.

Her son, Dennis, canoed to the house to save family photos and valuables and found 19 inches of water inside. He estimated renovations will take until Christmas.

"It's like moving out without having a place to go," he said.

Berta Mendoza, who speaks only Spanish, applied for assistance with the help of a translator. Three feet of water swamped her electrical system, destroyed her appliances and wrecked her furniture.

"Everything flooded," she said. "The kitchen will have to be completely rebuilt."

She spotted Tamayo, her neighbor, and the two embraced after weeks apart. They spoke rapidly in Spanish, swapping photos of their damaged houses.

Tamayo, who has been staying with her nephews since she evacuated her house, applied for assistance to speed the rebuilding process.

Her nephews need their space, she said, as does she.

Weber promises aid for region after Harvey

Port Arthur News

By Jesse Wright

September 16, 2017

Congressman Randy Weber stopped by the Jack Brooks Regional Airport on Saturday to reassure residents that the federal government would help the area recover from Tropical Storm Harvey.

Weber, a Republican, said he's lived on the Gulf Coast his entire life and he has never seen a storm like Harvey.

"It's been unbelievable," he said. "The water may be gone but Harvey recovery will be going on for a long time. Arguably, District 14 is ground zero for Harvey flooding."

So far, Congress has passed a \$15 billion package for Harvey relief and Weber said he expects more money to be made available.

"That \$15 billion package was only a down payment," he said. "They're estimating this to be over \$100 billion dollars."

To that end, Weber introduced representatives from FEMA and from the Small Business Administration who were on hand to answer questions.

Edward Dawson, the SBA representative, urged residents to apply for FEMA help and also for a SBA loan. FEMA awards grants, which do not have to be repaid, and the SBA awards low interest loans. However, Dawson pointed out that if someone is denied an SBA loan they can then use that denial to request FEMA money.

Weber said the whole process will take time, and he urged residents to be patient.

"There were 751,000 FEMA applications at close of business yesterday (Friday)," Weber said. He then added that as of Friday, only 119,000 homes had been inspected by FEMA.

“What we’re telling people is please, please be patient. It’s going to take time,” he said.

Ken Higginbotham, a FEMA external affairs officer, told citizens that FEMA is here to stay. Florida, he said, is being serviced by other FEMA representatives.

“We have a great group of people here and we’re not going anywhere,” he said. “We’re here for the long haul. Everybody from the president on down is working very, very hard in getting people back on the road to recovery in the state of Texas. There are 1,900 inspectors in the state. And there are close to a million people have applied. And we expect more.”

Higginbotham said FEMA has a new location in Port Arthur at 3600 Gates Boulevard and there will be someone at that location seven days a week.

The SBA location is at Lamar College’s Small Business Development Center at 1401 Procter St. Weber went on to say he expects federal aid to help “harden the grid,” in order to prevent another catastrophic rain from shutting down the city.

“We need to make sure the electrical grid doesn’t go down more than it has to,” he said.

When asked whether the torrential storm had made him reconsider the dangers of climate change, Weber said it’s not a good time to talk about that though he did not discount a future conversation.

“No, at this point we’re working on getting people whole and back in their homes,” he said. “We may have that discussion later, but right now were so focused on recovery and we’ll see if that takes place later.”

However, Weber did later concede that massive, destructive storms are occurring with more frequency.

“How many of you have been in a couple of 500 year floods? Five hundred years goes by like that,” he said, snapping his fingers.

He called Harvey an 800-year flood.

“I think we’ll do better next time,” he added.

As a consequence of the bigger, wetter storms, Weber said he expects Congress to allocate more money for better infrastructure in this area to protect the petrochemical industry.

“We expect to see this area of the country getting infrastructure dollars,” he said.

He then spent time chatting with constituents and giving an update on Congressional matters. Congress and the Senate must pass a budget by the end of the month, and Weber praised President Donald Trump’s willingness to work with Democrats to get a budget done.

“I don’t think he’s that bad,” Weber said of the president. “Let’s take the drama out of (the budget process. I’m mjust telling you the fact that the president will work across the aisle to get something done is different. And if we can learn from that ... so it doesn’t wind up on our shoulders as a big meltdown on Sept. 30, then we can do other things.”

If the Republican-held Congress and Senate do not pass a budget, there could be a government shutdown.

Disaster Recovery Centers to Open in Galveston and Nueces Counties

[Newsroom America](#)

September 15, 2017

AUSTIN, Texas – Two State of Texas/FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers will open Friday, Sept. 15, 2017: one in Nueces County in Port Aransas and another in Galveston County in League City.

Disaster recovery centers offer in-person support to individuals and businesses in counties included in the Texas federal disaster declaration for Hurricane Harvey and the subsequent floods.

FEMA registrations near 5,000 in county

[El Campo Leader-News](#)

By Matthew Hofferek

September 16, 2017

Registration for FEMA assistance approaches 5,000 residents in Wharton County with that number increasing as recovery efforts from Harvey continue.

“If you haven’t registered, register. And when you do, keep in contact and let FEMA know what your needs are,” FEMA External Affairs Officer William Lindsey said.

(Full story only with subscription)

Live Q&A session with FEMA representative

[KRIS-TV, Corpus Christi, TX](#)

September 18, 2017

CORPUS CHRISTI - FEMA assistance is still available for area residents who need help in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

If you need assistance, you can apply at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling the FEMA helpline at 1-800-621-FEMA (1-800-621-3362). If you are eligible for an assistance grant, you do not have to pay that grant back.

FEMA resource center

Many residents have sent in questions regarding the FEMA process, and KRIS 6 News is giving residents a chance to ask questions directly to a FEMA representative.

Tonight, join Lee Sausley along with a representative from FEMA for a Facebook Live questions and answer session.

Submit questions when the live video begins or post them directly to our Facebook page throughout the day at www.facebook.com/KRIS6News.

We Are Human Beings Like Everyone Else'

Victoria (TX) Advocate

By Marina Riker

September 17, 2017

Alexa's hope of living a normal life in the United States with her 11-year-old daughter came crashing down with the tree that landed on her home during Hurricane Harvey.

Just two years ago, the mother and daughter moved from Mexico to Bloomington, a rural community of about 2,500 residents.

Alexa bought a trailer, her daughter started school and the two started settling into their new life in the U.S., she said.

But all that changed when Hurricane Harvey destroyed almost everything the family owned. For the past three weeks, Alexa has been trying to pick up the pieces – a difficult task because she doesn't qualify for federal assistance.

"We are starting from zero," Alexa said in Spanish. "Little by little, it will get better."

Alexa didn't want to be identified by her real name for fear of being discovered by federal immigration authorities – a fear that was amplified in the midst of Hurricane Harvey, when many undocumented immigrants were forced to seek resources and shelter provided by the federal government.

Hurricane Harvey destroyed thousands of homes from Corpus Christi to Houston – a city home to an estimated 575,000 undocumented immigrants, according to the Pew Research Center.

Even though federal officials said undocumented residents would be protected from immigration enforcement at disaster shelters, some people were afraid to seek help.

The storm struck South Texas when undocumented communities were already on high alert. Earlier this year, Gov. Greg Abbott signed a law that allows police to inquire about the immigration status of people they detain. The law was scheduled to go into effect Sept. 1 – just days after thousands of people lost their homes – but the law was temporarily halted.

"I do know that people are sometimes afraid to ask for assistance because they're afraid they might be reported to authorities," said Jann Tracey, a spokeswoman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Whether undocumented immigrants seek shelter or apply for financial help to fix damaged homes, FEMA will not report their citizenship status to authorities, Tracey said.

"I think it's important for people to know that we don't report information to immigration services – nothing like that," she said.

Despite emergency officials' assurance, some families in Victoria County are still frightened.

For the past two weeks, Carl Dube has been installing tarps on damaged roofs and ripping out soaked insulation in Bloomington, where at least one-fifth of residents live in poverty, according to census estimates. So far, the volunteer has run into two undocumented families who lost their homes and were scared to ask FEMA for help, he said.

“They had been here awhile and bought property and put trailers on there,” said Dube, who works with the Mennonite Disaster Service. “But that’s all they had.”

Even if one family member might qualify, undocumented families often lack proper paperwork needed to apply for assistance, he said. Or they’re simply too afraid to ask for help in the first place.

“A lot of the time they’re afraid to admit it – afraid to get their names anywhere,” said Dube.

But all it takes is one person for an entire household to receive FEMA assistance, said the agency’s spokeswoman. Parents and guardians can apply for assistance on behalf of a child who was born here, said Tracey.

“No information will be gathered on the adult’s status,” she said. “But the parent will be asked to sign a (document).”

There are also exceptions for people who have green cards, she said. Noncitizens who are given special designations such as refugee status, asylum status or are victims of domestic violence may also qualify for help.

But for those who don’t qualify for financial assistance, finding resources in Victoria County is a challenge.

Despite hundreds of people losing their homes and apartments to Hurricane Harvey, there are no disaster shelters in the entire county. Most residents, like Alexa, were forced to rely on family, friends and volunteer groups for shelter and supplies.

All Alexa can do now is try to salvage belongings from what’s left of her trailer. A family member is trying to apply for FEMA on her behalf, but she doesn’t know whether it will work, she said.

Until then, she wishes she could find help like other Hurricane Harvey victims, she said.

“We are human beings like everyone else,” said Alexa. “But there are people who just think about themselves and don’t think about what others might be going through.”

Disaster Unemployment Assistance Available To Residents

Victoria (TX) Advocate

By Kathryn Cargo

September 15, 2017

SCHROEDER – Business owner Wanda Huth hasn’t been able to work since she closed her business the day before Hurricane Harvey hit.

She thought she was on her own and didn’t know how she was going to get by.

“It’s been a struggle,” said Huth, 62. “I’ve been worrying how I’m going to pay the bills. How am I going to get everything straightened up?”

Huth owns The Dam Store, a bakery and convenience store at Coletto Creek Park. She was one of dozens helped by the Texas Workforce Commission’s mobile disaster unit that visited the Crossroads this week to help residents apply for disaster unemployment assistance.

Huth was able to use a computer with internet access and a phone when the mobile unit visited Schroeder Volunteer Fire Department on Thursday.

Her internet and landline services have not been restored. Although Huth’s business didn’t receive a significant amount of damage, her store can’t reopen until Coletto Creek Park does.

“As long as the park is closed – the park was heavily damaged – I cannot produce the business,” she said. “I can’t do anything.”

Huth was approved before she left the mobile unit and said she’ll receive unemployment assistance until she’s able to open back up again.

“I didn’t think they helped small business people, but they do,” Huth said. “I didn’t think we’d be able to get the help, but they were there; they helped.”

Huth’s 32-year-old son who lives in Rockport with his family lost his home, so Huth has also been helping support them as well.

Huth didn’t know about the disaster unemployment assistance until Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel visited her business to assess damage Wednesday.

The tin at the building’s entrance flew off because of Harvey. She also applied for Small Business Administration loans to help get her business up and running.

Many people can’t get to local Texas Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent offices, which is how the mobile unit helps, said Debbie Oliva, career consultant with Texas Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent.

“(They) don’t have the means to get to the office to file for their lost wages,” she said. “That’s why the executive director of our board decided to do this, to give these people the opportunity to apply for lost wages. They’re hurting enough already. It’s really been a blessing for these people for us to get here.”

Unemployment Aid Coming Too Slowly To Help People Forced From Work By Harvey

[Houston Chronicle](#)

By Lydia Depillis

September 15, 2017

The eviction notice showed up on Steven Calhoun’s door on September 6.

He wanted to pay his rent, but he couldn’t after losing five days of work as prep cook and a week’s pay because of Hurricane Harvey. His best hope was disaster unemployment assistance, a program to help

people who temporarily lose work as the result of natural disaster, but more than two weeks after he filed a claim with the Texas Workforce Commission, he's still waiting.

"What am I gonna do?" thought Calhoun, 31, who moved to Houston from Milwaukee earlier this year. "This is the first time this has ever happened to me."

Calhoun is among an estimated 125,000 workers displaced by Hurricane Harvey who have filed for unemployment assistance provided as part of federal disaster relief — most, if not all of whom are still waiting for help. The Texas Workforce Commission, unprepared for the deluge of claims, said it doesn't know how many claims, if any, have been paid yet.

Unions and social service organizations helping workers apply for disaster unemployment assistance say it can take hours to make it through the process when applying by phone, since the TWC's lines are clogged with callers.

"People haven't been able to get through the system, and that in itself is a huge problem," says Josephine Lee, an organizer with El Pueblo Primero, a program based at San Pablo Episcopal Church in Southeast Houston that serves mostly Latino immigrants.

In order to address the demand, the Workforce Commission said it is hiring 80 more people to process phone calls and has extended its service hours to 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Governor Greg Abbott on Wednesday also waived the waiting period for benefits, which usually delays payment for the first week of a worker's unemployment.

"Our agency has been working diligently to respond to the needs of those who have lost their livelihoods and much more in some cases," said Lisa Givens, a spokeswoman for the Workforce Commission.

But for workers like Calhoun who live on thin margins, those checks often don't come through quickly enough to save them from financial hardship. Calhoun earns \$10 an hour working for OTG, a New York food service contractor at Bush Intercontinental airport.

While at home in the first few days after the storm, Calhoun applied for benefits online, hoping for a turnaround before his apartment complex's grace period was up. (Reached by phone, an assistant manager for the Sedona Pointe apartments said they would not be evicting people impacted by the storm this month, but Calhoun says that's not what he was told.)

Days went by, and no help came. Calhoun applied for every other source of aid he could think of, from FEMA to the Red Cross, but they were all reserved for people whose homes were damaged, and the unemployment assistance claim kept showing up as pending. Calhoun tried to stay calm, knowing that stress could trigger his epilepsy.

"How is this fair to us?" Calhoun says. "How is this fair to anybody here who's been affected?"

Navigating the unemployment insurance system can be difficult even under normal circumstances, when Texas receives 30,000 or 40,000 claims a month. Texas pays only 79 percent of its claims within 14 days, which is below the federal standard of 87 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Hany Khalil, executive director of the Texas Gulf Coast Labor Federation, said he'd like to see the process streamlined and the deadline for applying — which is now Sept. 29 — extended to accommodate those who'd had trouble getting through.

“The response of Houston during the hurricane was one of enormous generosity,” says Khalil. “We didn’t ask, ‘do you really need help to get out of this flooded zone?’ Our government needs that same spirit.”

The left-leaning National Employment Law Project has also advocated for benefit levels to be raised for the disaster-assistance program and eligibility requirements to be relaxed. Representatives of the labor union UNITE-HERE, which represents about 1,500 workers at Bush Airport, say that about half the claims that they helped people file were rejected, usually because workers hadn’t worked enough in the previous year to qualify for benefits.

Many employers just pay their workers for the hours they missed due to the hurricane, which saves them the stress of having to deal with the state system at all. Employees at United Airlines, for example, had no interruption to their paychecks.

Some small businesses, of course, can’t afford to make payroll for hours that weren’t worked if money wasn’t coming in. Large ones, though, can typically shell out wages for at least a few days.

On Wednesday, after being contacted by a reporter, OTG said it would be paying all its workers for lost time during the hurricane. Employees were then notified that the extra money would be included in their next paychecks, at the end of the week. “No crewmember will lose a dime in their paycheck because of Hurricane Harvey,” said Eric Brinker, the company’s vice president for experience.

But for Calhoun, it wasn’t soon enough. On Thursday, he took out a \$1,000 auto title loan in order to pay his rent before the landlord added on any more fees. After that, other bills await.

“There’s a lot of people in this situation,” Calhoun says. “They’re trying their best to hold it together.”

Port Aransas feels economic pinch after Hurricane Harvey

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

By Kirsten Crow

September 16, 2017

PORT ARANSAS - Tucked away on Tarpon Street, the porch is bigger than the bar – at least, in sensibility. Sheltered from some of the worst of Hurricane Harvey’s menace, the wooden slabs are firm beneath feet, and leaning against the railing is about as good of a spot as sitting on the benches. Inside, countless ball caps hang suspended from the ceiling. On a window shelf, there are rows of bright orange-capped mosquito spray.

The band, splashed with blue and red lights against white paneling, gears up for their set, reminiscent of a little Buffet, a smidge of surf: “Something’s going to happen,” the lead of the band says on approach to the microphone.

“They don’t do it like they do in Port Aransas.”

Less than a week into the reopening of Shorty’s Place – billed as the oldest and friendliest bar in Port Aransas – the floor was full.

It was among the first businesses to relaunch after Harvey thundered its havoc on the Gulf Coast, blasting the city with nearly six feet of storm surge, slamming homes and businesses with 132 mph winds, downing power lines and tossing boats across the streets, yards and parking lots scattershot.

Several businesses have also since reopened. But some owners are still taking account of their shops, throwing out sopping merchandise, slogging thick-sludged floors with a squeegee, pulling away water-logged drywall and gazing up to a sky framed by the remainder of a roof. Others are in holding patterns, waiting for final word from insurance adjusters and crunching numbers.

While the cleanup of Port Aransas continues, it isn't yet known how the businesses – which primarily revolve around tourism – will reopen, once the immediacy of pulling debris to the curb passes. The piles of scrapped wood, furniture and tree branches outnumber the crews to lift it with heavy machinery and transfer it to a temporary site near the edge of the city limits.

Businesses lost Labor Day weekend – the last big moneymaker closing out the summer season – to Harvey. The holiday weekend revenue is usually included in the pot many businesses use to sustain themselves over the slower, off-season months between fall and Spring Break, when there is little patronage other than island residents and winter Texans.

Days after the band played, the hurricane remained much of the talk at Shorty's. But on the porch among neighbors, with the clink of a few beers, long draws of cigarettes and an occasional impromptu song, it was easier to pull some laughter out of it.

"Did you stay? How are you doing?"

"I'm making it."

Given the destruction across town, Shorty's owner Edwin Myers was surprised that the small bar and patio, built in 1946, survived and with minimal damage.

It took about 6 inches of water, he said. He cleaned it up and outfitted it with a generator, a wall fan and a box cooler.

And then the customers came.

"They didn't have anybody to go talk to," Myers said of the customers who turned out to the bar, a Port Aransas staple. "Cell phones (were) messed up. I guess you could say in times like these people need something to be happy about."

Many establishments may take weeks or months to be ready for customers. Many are aiming for a reopening ahead of Spring Break, the first of the big weeks. Loose estimates on individual openings range from weeks to two years.

An uncertain path

Some business owners don't doubt a recovery.

But what a recovery will look like, and when, is an uncertainty shared by the community as its economic engine comes to an abrupt halt in the aftermath of the storm. The work ahead goes beyond property cleanups and reconstruction, but also budgetary tie-ups, delays from overwhelmed insurance adjusters, slow-coming federal aid, a workforce displaced and competition for contractors.

“You want to open up as fast as you can but at the same time we’re going into the winter season where it’s a lot slower,” Myers said. “We’re going to spend a whole lot of money trying to get open and we’re going to spend a whole lot of money to get through the winter. You try to balance how fast you come back, how big, how much staff do you have.”)

But there seems to be a general consensus of business owners: it's not good, but it could have been worse. And many have no plans to leave – some are taking it as an opportunity to improve, even.

Courting tourism

There aren't dollar estimates yet on overall property destruction wrought by Harvey when the storm descended on Port Aransas' gulf shores Aug. 25, carrying Category 4 force winds. Few, if any, properties were untouched. That damage ranges widely from shingles torn off a rooftop to total losses.

A full assessment of municipal damages isn't yet available either, but the bill to replace or repair city equipment and facilities has already reached \$16 million and climbing, according to officials.

The revenue loss directly related to Harvey – such as dives in sales tax, and hotel and motel taxes, and property taxes – will likely be substantial, officials said.

About five million visitors are drawn to the barrier island each year, according to the Port Aransas and Mustang Island Chamber of Commerce. How that translates into dollar impacts on the economy hasn't been calculated.

Tourism in Port Aransas stretches far beyond eateries, bars and hotels. There is also an arts scene, and a healthy outdoor recreation and ecotourism industry that draws fishing aficionados to the charter boats and birders to preserves and wetlands.

“Everything here lives and breathes on tourists,” said City Manager David Parsons. “You may have a business here that’s not tourism-related but it’s here because the tourism is here.”

Sales taxes and hotel and motel taxes help capture a glimpse, if not the full picture, of tourism's effect on the economy.

The city's general fund for the 2017-2018 fiscal year is set at \$10.3 million, said Darla Honea, finance director. The percentage of sales tax that goes to the city – which directly feeds into the general fund – had been projected as \$1.4 million. Hotel and motel taxes, which includes support for the chamber of commerce and special projects such as the nature preserve, had been budgeted for about \$4.7 million.

The city has already approved its budget. But the revenue that would likely be needed for an aggressive rebuild will be a question, despite insurance and aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Making a comeback

This was intended to be the year that a slate of new, off-season attractions would debut.

The idea had been to get away from being a “binge destination,” where all income relies on tight time frame, said Jeffrey Hentz, CEO and president of the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Bureau.

One of those new events was Beachtoberfest – anticipated to begin at the end of this month – a series of five weekends that was scheduled to include a music festival and harvest moon regatta, among other activities. It's now canceled, but should be on for next year, Hentz said.

Instead, a benefit concert is planned for October, he said.

The chamber had been looking to bolster the existing economy, as well, with sports tourism, bringing dollars in from traveling tournaments. Officials had sought voters' approval of a 2 percent increase in hotel and motel taxes to support the construction of a venue. It was thought it would be up for a referendum in November.

The City Council on Thursday voted to cancel that referendum, although it could be revisited sometime in the future.

It's not clear how many Winter Texans still plan to come to Port Aransas this year, although there are at least some condos open and spaces available in trailer parks.

Hentz expects any negative impacts to be "significant short term, but long term – it's going to be an unbelievable rebound."

That rebound could begin early next year, he said, adding that he anticipates about 75 to 80 percent of businesses open by March or April.

The chamber's role is changing, at least for the time being.

"We're not a tourism marketing company anymore," Hentz said. "We're a rebuilders, we're a morale booster, we're the cheer squad, we're the cheerleaders, we're the group that's going to tell people we're coming back."

"It shows the spirit of the destination," he said. "I think a large majority of tourists want to be a part of a destination like that."

'It's our home'

Tourists will come for the open beaches and island life, whether that's this year or in two, said Peyton Lytle, a past employee of one of the larger tourist-targeted gift shops, Palace.

But much of what needs to be regained are lifetimes of investments into homes and businesses.

"If you just take a look around now, you can see everyone is working hard," Lytle said. "Everyone's working all day, every day trying to get stuff done.... We have a town. It's beautiful and it's our home, despite the tourism or not. It's still our home and everyone's going to put it back together."

NFIP and Flood Maps

Harvey's Insured Losses Estimated To Cost Nearly \$19 Billion

[Associated Press](#)

September 15, 2017

The nation's largest state insurance trade association estimates insured losses from Harvey at nearly \$19 billion — and that doesn't count damage not covered by insurance.

The Insurance Council of Texas says windstorm and other claims from Harvey will be worth nearly \$3 billion. Approximately 250,000 damaged cars and commercial vehicles will trigger around another \$4.75 billion in insurance claims.

The council cites the Federal Emergency Management Agency in estimating that Harvey's flooding will result in \$11 billion in payments to homeowners with flood insurance. Those flood losses would be the second highest on record, trailing only Hurricane Katrina's \$16 billion.

Harvey battered Texas' Gulf Coast and flooded a vast area stretching from Houston to the Louisiana border. The storm caused 70-plus deaths and damaged or destroyed more than 250,000 homes.

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Hiscox sees \$150 million net claims from Hurricane Harvey

[Reuters](#)

By Noor Zainab Hussain

September 18, 2017

Lloyd's of London underwriter Hiscox Ltd (HSX.L) said it estimates net claims of about \$150 million (110.3 million pounds) based on an insured market loss of \$25 billion from Hurricane Harvey, which lashed Texas in the last week of August.

"This (claims) is within the group's modeled range of claims for an event of this nature, and reinsurance protections for the group remain substantially intact," Hiscox said.

Hiscox said it had two main areas of exposure to Harvey, which caused a prolonged period of flooding over Houston - reinsurance and insurance lines, including flood cover for homeowners and businesses.

"After a long period of price reductions, insurance rates in the affected areas and in specific sectors such as large property are likely to increase. In the wider global insurance market for large risks, we expect rates to stabilize and begin to increase," Chief Executive Bronte Masojada said.

Hiscox will announce an estimate of net claims arising from Hurricane Irma, once the impact of that storm has become clearer, it said.

Rival risk modeling firm RMS estimates insured losses from Harvey of \$25-\$35 billion, while AIR Worldwide forecast total insured losses in the United States for Irma of between \$20 billion and \$40 billion.

Reporting by Noor Zainab Hussain in Bengaluru, editing by Anjuli Davies

Sandy Survivors Warn Harvey And Irma Victims About What's Ahead

[Mother Jones](#)

By Chris D'Angelo

September 17, 2017

Nearly five years after Superstorm Sandy destroyed their house, Sophia Vailakis-DeVirgilio and her family are still waiting to rebuild and return to their property. It's a nightmare she fears many in Texas, Florida and the Caribbean have only just begun.

"God help them," Vailakis-DeVirgilio told HuffPost, adding that when it comes to securing insurance money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency she expects those hurt by the back-to-back, record-breaking hurricanes will "get raked over the coals."

Vailakis-DeVirgilio and her husband had been paying into the National Flood Insurance Program for nearly a decade when the storm surge from Sandy inundated their home in Broad Channel, New York. The damage was extensive. The walls of their newly renovated seaside cottage were blown out, and the water "rocked and twisted" the house, knocking it from its foundation, she said.

The couple did what it was supposed to: They filed a flood claim with FEMA, which oversees the federal flood insurance program—established by Congress in 1968 to provide low-cost insurance to people living in flood-prone areas. As they would soon find out, being an NFIP policyholder doesn't necessarily mean that rebuilding in the wake of a natural disaster will happen quickly.

A few months after filing their claim, the family was cut a "lowball" check for \$69,000, Vailakis-DeVirgilio said. Unsatisfied, the family hired an attorney. It would be more than 2½ years of fighting FEMA and the insurance company—while her husband Lenny was undergoing treatment for liver cancer and hepatitis C—before they received an offer they found acceptable. That settlement remains confidential.

Since receiving the money they were owed, the couple has dealt with numerous other issues that have prevented them from rebuilding, including a contractor who defrauded them of more than \$40,000 and numerous issues with permits, she told HuffPost. Vailakis-DeVirgilio, her husband and their 15-year-old daughter have moved four times since the Sandy disaster and are currently living in a rental home three doors away from their vacant property.

Vailakis-DeVirgilio's husband, a former New York City schoolteacher, has drained his retirement account. And had it not been for her job, working a condensed three-day workweek on a computer help desk, she says she would never have been able to wage such a battle.

"This is a full-time job," she said.

Vailakis-DeVirgilio was among a number of Superstorm Sandy victims who traveled to Washington this week to warn the victims of hurricanes Harvey and Irma that their problems have only just begun and to urge them to be vigilant as they fight to recover.

"The storm is the easy part," George Kasimos, founder of Stop FEMA Now, a citizen advocacy group fighting to reform NFIP, said during a news conference Wednesday at the Longworth House Office Building on Capitol Hill.

The NFIP, which is now almost \$25 billion in debt, was set to expire Sept. 30. But with national attention on the struggling program and little time for constructive reform, Congress passed legislation extending it until Dec. 8. The punt was tucked into an agreement struck by President Donald Trump and Senate Democrats to provide billions of dollars in disaster aid for Hurricane Harvey, raise the debt ceiling and keep the government from shutting down.

Stop FEMA Now is among a number of groups calling for an overhaul of NFIP. Its members say it's time that the program protected homeowners from outrageous premiums, pushed money to storm victims rather

than insurance companies and government contractors, and held insurers and engineers accountable for fraud.

Augie Matteis Jr.'s law firm represents more than 1,200 clients in New York and New Jersey who opted to reopen insurance claims in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. Nearly five years after the disaster, 900 of those clients are still waiting for a reimbursement, he said, adding that Irma and Harvey victims need look no further for a glimpse of what they're up against.

"When is this mess going to end?" Matteis asked. "This is the proverbial swamp of Washington that people talk about. Somebody needs to stand up now and make FEMA pay these claims fairly—not next year, not next month, but right now." "This is the proverbial swamp of Washington that people talk about. Somebody needs to stand up now and make FEMA pay these claims fairly—not next year, not next month, but right now."

What was once a self-sustaining program has been walloped in recent years by an increasing number of claims following costly natural disasters, including Sandy and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In fact, 1 percent of the roughly 5 million policyholders account for 25 to 30 percent of all claims, according to Scientific American. The Government Accountability Office has labeled the program as "high risk," citing "structural weaknesses in how it's funded." And in a report published Sept. 1, the Congressional Budget Office found that the program is operating at a \$1.4 billion annual shortfall.

In a call with reporters before the Stop FEMA Now news conference, Roy Wright, FEMA's deputy associate administrator for insurance and mitigation, said the agency had taken steps in recent years to refocus the program on policyholders, to be more transparent and to make the appeals process more fair. He said he was committed to ensuring policyholders are paid "every dollar" that they are owed.

Losses from Hurricane Harvey alone are expected to cost NFIP \$11 billion. So far, 84,000 Harvey victims have filed claims with FEMA, and the flood insurance program has divvied out \$177 million in advanced payments—a figure Wright said he expected to "rapidly" climb.

Then there's Hurricane Irma, which pummeled islands in the Caribbean before moving on to the Florida Keys and the U.S. Southeast. Although still early, Irma will only further stress a program that, as The Naples Daily News in Florida reported, has just \$1.5 billion on hand and \$5.8 billion in borrowing authority.

Among those who shared their personal horror stories Wednesday was Diane Mazzacca, whose 1,400-square-foot home in Beach Haven West, New Jersey, was flooded with 4 feet of water during Sandy. She said she's been fighting an initial payout offer of \$27,000 and has yet to receive a full reimbursement. Her advice for anyone affected by Harvey or Irma: "Put on your big girl pants, because it's going to be a long, bumpy ride."

"My heart breaks for everybody that has been hit with these floods," Mazzacca said, holding back tears. "I know that their task at hand is going to be beyond stressful."

Phil Nufrio, a professor of public policy, administration and emergency management at Metropolitan College of New York whose Seaside Park, New Jersey, home was damaged by Sandy, said people will be "undercut" and "shorted" by the agency.

"Take pictures. Tons of pictures," Nufrio said. "Keep your receipts, organize your receipts, because you are going to go through a quagmire of government bureaucracy."

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.) joined the group of Sandy survivors in calling for a reform of the NFIP. He said the program is “essential” for America’s coastal communities and has been successful in driving safer building standards. Instead of vilifying it, it’s time to fix it, he said.

“We cannot let the program lapse,” he said. “It will be a disaster for the American people.”

MacArthur also stressed that while all eyes are on Texas and Florida right now, FEMA’s job “is far from being done” in New Jersey and New York.

Like others who spoke Wednesday, Vailakis-DeVirgilio said she’s all for reforming NFIP to make it more sustainable and holding insurance companies accountable. But she sees a bigger issue that can’t be ignored: climate change.

“It’s not just ‘let’s just move people.’ We have to do more than one thing,” she said of fixing NFIP. “I’m a registered Republican. Climate change is real. I’m a climate refugee, my whole family is. We can either take the bull by the horns and be at the forefront of technology and the economy of climate change and how we can correct it, or we can let the rest of the world—like China—do it.”

Vailakis-DeVirgilio also fought back tears when asked about the people whose lives and homes have been devastated by Harvey and Irma.

“If I could go down there and help every single one of them I would,” she said. “Right now I have to focus on getting [my family] home.”

His Home Flooded, the Port Arthur Mayor Puts His City First

New York Times

By Rick Rojas

September 17, 2017

PORT ARTHUR, Tex. — On a winding street of older brick homes in the center of town, only one house is without a mountain of debris on the front yard. The house, a two-story at the end of the cul-de-sac, had not been spared by the recent storm, which submerged three-quarters of this coastal industrial city.

The homeowner, Derrick Ford Freeman, has just not had time to worry about his own affairs. He is the mayor of Port Arthur.

Normally the job of mayor is part-time, requiring only one white button-down shirt embroidered with his name and the city logo. Lately, his mother has been washing that shirt every morning. Mr. Freeman has spent his days racing around the city, lobbying a visiting senator for federal aid one moment, sitting next to a woman sobbing onto his shoulder the next. He has focused on practical matters like restoring trash pickup, reopening schools and finding homes for displaced families.

The mayor knows what residents have endured from Hurricane Harvey because he has suffered through it himself. But he has set aside his troubles to look after his city’s much larger ones.

Like many of the people he has comforted, Mr. Freeman is not sure where his family will live when they come back to Port Arthur. He does not have flood insurance. In the week after the storm, he, too, was rushing home before sundown in case he had to fend off looters.

When the storm moved in on Aug. 30, the mayor was at home, hopping between calls, emails and text messages, when he noticed a shoe floating by. Shortly after, he posted videos of his house flooding on Facebook.

“We weren’t ready for that,” he told his viewers. “No one was.”

Before long, the water had climbed high enough to reach his waist. His wife had already taken their children to Austin. But the mayor had stayed put.

In Port Arthur, like many places along the Texas coast, time can be measured in storms: the surges of water during Hurricane Ike (2008), or the “blue roofs,” the government-provided tarpaulins that covered damaged homes, after Hurricane Rita (2005). But there was already a sense that this time, Port Arthur had been battered by something much worse.

Nearly a week after the flooding began, parts of the city remained inaccessible. The city’s newspaper, The Port Arthur News, had waist-high water in its office, and its editor, whose home and car were flooded, was commuting from a hotel room provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency that was 60 miles away in Lake Charles, La.

In a church parking lot where a group from Louisiana was handing out meals, one man hugged the mayor with a pained look on his face. “We’re not doing those somber hugs,” Mr. Freeman told him. “We’re coming back, baby!”

The storm struck a city of 55,000 that already had its share of struggles. Port Arthur, like much of the region, has an economy driven by the oil industry, and it has the largest refinery in the United States within its city limits. Even so, unemployment and poverty have been stubborn problems, and the city’s busiest streets are checkered with empty lots and rundown buildings.

Port Arthur was once bustling, with a robust white middle class and the distinction, in 1973, of being an All-American City, a title awarded for civic innovation. But over time, the white population gravitated toward the cookie-cutter subdivisions that sprouted nearby, taking with them businesses that had been in downtown Port Arthur.

The void was filled, in large measure, by a wealth of diversity: The City Council is mostly black. A Vietnamese-American community flourished after the war. In one corner of the city, there was a Dominican barber shop, a Mexican meat market and a garden outside Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church with a statue of the Virgin Mary rising above nearby houses.

Before the storm, Mr. Freeman had ambitious aspirations: diversifying the economy and changing the minds of people who viewed the city as a place to avoid. As he confronts an enormous recovery, he hopes it will spark an infusion of opportunity rather than dashing hopes for change.

But the mayor’s concerns now are more immediate. More than 100 schoolteachers and another 100 city employees, he said, did not have homes ready for them to return to. If the city were to spring back, they would need places to stay.

As a resident, he understood how difficult it could be to move forward. After all, he had made almost no progress in repairing his waterlogged home. “I’m happy to have a lot of work,” he admitted at one point to the police officer assigned to ride around with him. “It keeps my mind off of it.”

After a visit to a school whose gym had been transformed into a Red Cross shelter, the mayor hopped back in his car, one hand holding the steering wheel, the other a hamburger. Another dignitary, this time a United States senator, had come from out of town.

“All right,” Mr. Freeman said, laughing, “let’s see what my man Ted Cruz has to say.”

As he drove down streets that, days ago, he had traversed by boat, Mr. Freeman, 41, explained how deeply his roots ran in Port Arthur. He was raised here. The middle school he had just left used to be a high school, which he graduated from in 1994. He has family ties to the rapper Bun B, whose group UGK, short for Underground Kingz, started in Port Arthur.

He has known his wife, Shannon, a young adult author and high school English teacher, since he was a child; they attended church and Sunday school together.

He had a winding path to politics. He performed in a Christian rap group called T.F.O., or The Forgiven Ones. He was a disc jockey for the local hip-hop and R&B station, making \$11 an hour during a prime evening shift. (His name on air: D-Free.) Then, he left for a decade, living around Los Angeles, hoping to make a career in the entertainment industry.

He returned when he and his wife were expecting their first child. He served on the City Council before he was elected mayor last year. His day job is in real estate, but through politics, he hoped he could make an impression on his city.

“To get a blessing, I always say, you’ve got to be a blessing,” he said.

There have been victories since the storm: the mayor announced schools would open earlier than planned. And there have been hurdles: Some residents expressed worries that the city had not done enough to prepare, and others complained about barges the mayor had hoped would house hundreds of displaced people.

After a week of dealing with the recovery, Mr. Freeman’s exhaustion was starting to show: He could not stop yawning.

The day had a packed schedule like the others before it: A briefing at Police Headquarters and meetings at City Hall. He drove to a mall to take a photograph with the retired baseball player Curt Schilling, who had traveled here to volunteer. Then he was off to the county airport to meet Elaine C. Duke, the acting secretary of Homeland Security.

He was mindful that Hurricane Irma, which struck Florida, might mean that the window of attention on Texas could be closing. He wanted to secure help before that happened. “We’ve got to do everything we can to regain or keep confidence in Port Arthur,” he said, “so they’ll rebuild with us.”

He followed Ms. Duke’s motorcade back to Thomas Jefferson, the school with the gymnasium filled with cots. Some residents slept on a warm afternoon, covers pulled up to their face. Restless boys chased each other. One asked an aide following Ms. Duke in a pinstriped suit if he were the president.

One woman gave the mayor a hug. It was his mother, Deborah, who has been among the regular volunteers. “They can say he’s young,” she said of her son, “but he’s got a lot of heart and a lot of wisdom.”

Another familiar person, a volunteer for his campaign, asked for \$5.

The mayor pulled a wad of bills from his pocket and handed him one.

He climbed back into a sport utility vehicle, bound for another meeting at City Hall. He had a few stops left, but he would make it home before sunset. There, he would go upstairs and squeeze into his children's bunk bed to sleep.

"Close the door," he said, "and the smell doesn't hit you too bad."

Volunteers/Donations/Charities

Long road to recovery for Dickinson after Hurricane Harvey

KTRK-TV, Houston, TX

By Courtney Fischer

September 18, 2017

DICKINSON, Texas -- When Harvey tore through southeast Texas, people in Dickinson weren't prepared for what would happen. Ninety percent of the town flooded, leaving thousands devastated.

Dickinson is one of the hardest hit cities in the Houston area. The local police department reports more than 7,000 homes and 88 businesses were seriously damaged. In this small town of 20,000 people, at least half the people were affected.

Thousands of residents are still seeking help.

One of those places to get that help is at the Dickinson Railroad Museum. For the last three weeks, it's been the main donation center. People can pick up everything from food and water to diapers and cleaning supplies.

Often times, there's a long line of cars hours before the 10 a.m. opening. The cars don't stop coming until closing at 5 p.m.

"It means a lot. It means a lot for us and it's going to help us get back on our feet," said Jessica Barrera, from the front passenger seat of her SUV. Volunteers load water and dog food into her van.

Angela Forbes, Dickinson's director of donations, is running the operation. She estimates, since the storm, at least 10,000 people have come through this line. Remember, that's about half of Dickinson's population.

"I just feel like I've got to help. I've got to help," Forbes said. "So many people are my dear friends and I love this community and to see it at one of its lowest points, it just breaks my heart."

Though thousands of people have driven through this line, Forbes estimates there are still hundreds who need help and won't ask for it.

"So many people, they have so much pride. They don't want to come to these things," she said.

Which is why, every day, Forbes and her husband load up a flatbed with pallets of water, boxes of food and buckets of bleach, get in their truck, and drive to a new neighborhood.

"Do you need anything? We have all types of supplies on board," Forbes asked Charles White in front of his home. The debris pile in front of White's house is easily six feet tall.

"The only thing we need right now is bedding," White said.

White and his family are sleeping in their backyard, in a tent, on air mattresses. They've spent the last week gutting their home.

"Okay, I'll get some sheets sent over to you right away," Forbes said, instructing her husband to write down the White's address. "I'll see you soon, in a little while."

However Forbes can help, she does.

A few homes down, Marcel Radder takes a couple cases of water. He's been so busy cleaning his mom's house, he hasn't had a chance to ask for help.

"I'm so happy there's people out here that care and that are willing to supply and help us out," Radder said.

His biggest fear is that Dickinson will be forgotten.

"Every time I turn the news on it's Houston and it's kind of like Dickinson was being left out. Dickinson got hit pretty hard," Radder said. "You can't just say Houston. You have to say Galveston County, Houston, Lake Jackson--everybody got hit in this. It's everybody that's going to need the help."

It will be months, maybe years, before Dickinson is back to normal. Forbes wants her neighbors to know that the city won't stop until everyone gets the help they need.

If you'd like to donate to the people of Dickinson, Forbes says they are in desperate need of cleaning supplies. You can drop off donations at the Dickinson Railroad Museum, located at 218 FM 517 Road West in Dickinson between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. during the week.

Magic Johnson and Stevie Wonder donate relief supplies for Harvey victims

[Newsfix](#)

September 16, 2017

HOUSTON -- Houston was sprinkled with a little Magic and a lot of Wonder today!

Harris County Constable Precinct 1 has been at the forefront of the county-wide relief effort for Hurricane Harvey victims, receiving donations from around the country and distributing them to thousands of residents affected by the storm.

To further these efforts, Precinct 1 received a shipment of donated relief supplies organized by basketball legend Magic Johnson and music artist Stevie Wonder!

In the wake of the storm, the two organized a donation drive with the help of West Angeles Church in Los Angeles and secured transportation via UPS trucks to Houston.

Volunteers and local community leaders gathered together to distribute supplies to those affected by the flood waters.

Houstonians are thankful for the donations and assistance they received on this path to recovery!

Baker students do their part to help Hurricane Harvey victims

The Baker Orange, Baldwin City, KS

By Julia Sanders

September 17, 2017

Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas on Aug. 25, 2017, dropping a record 50 inches of rain in some parts of Texas. According to CNN, this massive storm left 30,000 people in need of shelter and claimed at least 60 lives.

Since Baker University is located in the Midwest, the affect and the detriment that hurricanes like Harvey cause receive little attention. However, a number of students find their home in Texas, making the impact of Harvey much more personal for some.

This led organizations around campus to start raising funds and supplies for those affected by Hurricane Harvey. Particularly, Zeta Chi Fraternity as well as the men's and women's basketball teams.

Zeta Chi decided to do a fundraiser, after sophomore Danny Griese introduced the idea to his house.

"Home Depot was asking for volunteers and my dad volunteered to help out. He is going to drive a truck down there full of supplies like food, clothes, money, equipment and everything that they could use down there," Griese said. "My mom told me that and she told me she was going to do one for her work, so I wanted to do one here as well."

The Instagram post from Zeta Chi Fraternity advertising their donation drive to help the victims affected by Hurricane Harvey. They raised \$201.68. Other supplies like T-shirts, diapers, medical supplies and more were also donated.

To fundraise, Zeta Chi set up a table outside of the Long Student Center with a box for supplies as well as a jar for monetary donations. In addition to tabling, Zeta Chi also reached out to other fraternities and sororities to raise awareness of the fundraiser and ask for additional supplies. Through this, they were able to collect \$211.68 along with various supplies, like canned goods and clothing items.

Noah Hastings, a sophomore Zeta Chi member, believes that raising money for those in need allows people, especially college students, to gain perspective about the world around them.

"We [Baker students] kind of seclude ourselves," Hastings said. "We all know each other so we see the problems here, but we kind of forget that there is an outside world and that there are people in need somewhere else, so I think it's awesome to donate and help others in need."

Along with Zeta Chi, the men's and women's basketball teams also collected supplies to send to those affected by the hurricane.

Senior Caitlin Modesett saw her team come together to help those in need.

“We ended up filling up a couple boxes completely full with clothes and shoes and stuff like that and then sent it down to Houston to help the people in the centers,” Modesett said.

Raising money or supplies to help those in need was a particularly important issue for Modesett, as she is from Houston and was personally affected by the hurricane.

Although her house only suffered roof damage, she knew many people who were forced to evacuate because of the flooding that came from the unexpected rainfall.

“I think the biggest thing about this was that no one really expected it to be as bad as it was because we got a year’s worth of rainfall in 5 days, so it caused that much flooding,” Modesett said.

Overall, both the basketball teams and Zeta Chi were able to collect supplies and donations that would go toward helping those affected by the hurricane and saw the severity of the situation, no matter how personally connected they were to the issue.

“It’s important to remember that you’re blessed and lucky for what you have right now, but that might not always be there so do what you want other people to do for you,” Modesett said.

Displaced Animals

Renee Zellweger helping Houston animals after Harvey

KTRK-TV, Houston, TX

September 17, 2017

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- Homeward bound! 70 cats and dogs are going on the trip of a lifetime to find their fur-ever homes in California.

Since Hurricane Harvey, local shelters have been packed with more and more animals. So, volunteers with Austin Pets Alive, Houston Pet's Alive, MAD Dog Rescue and Lucy's Pet Foundation are sending animals to California that were in shelters before the hurricane hit.

"Houston Pets Alive" only became a physical shelter after they rescued hundreds of animals during Harvey, but they've been saving animals from euthanasia for years.

"It's an emergency situation because there are hundreds being housed and there is no room for any of them and a lot of people lost their homes," said volunteer, Dr. Karen Halligan.

One volunteer made the opposite trip from California to Houston to help out.

"I was in Los Angeles and like everybody, I was just watching it and thinking well what are we going to do?" said Katy native and famous actress, Renee Zellweger.

Zellweger has been helping local rescue groups.

"I'm a Texan and I just wanted to find a place where I could contribute. It didn't feel right to just send a donation. That works and everything but I'm from here so it didn't feel right to just stay home and not be part of a team," said Zellweger

Volunteers are hoping to do six or seven more trips.

Adorable Future Roommate Alert: These Good Dogs Displaced By Hurricane Harvey Are Now In NYC

Gothamist

By Jen Chung

September 17, 2017

Many animal advocacy groups flocked to Houston and surrounding areas to assist with animal rescue efforts when Hurricane Harvey hit. The ASPCA was one of them and the group brought back 19 shelter dogs to find new homes for them in New York City.

All of the animals, unowned and homeless before the Harvey arrived, were evacuated from a Corpus Christi facility, according to the ASPCA. Shelters and rescue groups, as well as other organizations like Wings of Rescue, transported animals from Texas to make room for animals who were abandoned during the hurricane.

The dogs are all available to be adopted at the ASPCA's Adoption Center at 424 East 92nd Street (between 1st and York Avenues) on the Upper East Side. Most of the dogs are medium- to large-sized. The ASPCA shared pictures of five of the 14/10 puppies:

Sheeba - Six-month-old female shepherd mix

Brick - Two-year-old male shepherd mix

Maximus - Four-year-old male black lab mix

Gumpy - four-year-old male hound mix

Hickory - six-month-old male shepherd mix

"Despite their long journey, these dogs have displayed incredible resilience," said Gail Buchwald, Senior Vice President of the ASPCA Adoption Center. "They have adjusted quickly to their new surroundings and their individual personalities have begun to emerge. We're extremely thankful to have been part of their rescue and transport process, and are happy to help conclude their journey by finding them loving homes." The dogs are all vaccinated, microchipped and spayed or neutered. Those interested in adopting a pet must be 21 years old or over and should bring one government-issued photo ID (i.e. driver's license, passport, military ID, or non-driver ID), proof of address, and contact information for a personal reference.

Homeless Dogs And Cats From Hurricane Harvey In Houston Move To South, Central Coasts

KCLU-TV

By Debra Greene

September 17, 2017

More than a hundred homeless dogs and cats who were victims of Hurricane Harvey in Houston are now living on the South and Central Coasts.

Santa Maria Valley Humane Society Executive Director Sean Hawkins – who lived in Houston for more than three decades – led the effort to relocate the animals to his and four other shelters in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties.

"When the storm hit and they were inundated with thousands of animals who were being evacuated because of the storm, they have no capacity to care for these pets. So, its incumbent on others and animal sheltering to step up and say 'Yes, we can help,'" he said.

The 135 animals that arrived this past week and 65 more that are expected in coming weeks were either already in the Houston shelter system before the hurricane or their owners brought them into the shelter.

The four other local shelters that are taking in the animals are the Santa Barbara Humane Society, Santa Barbara County Animal Services, Animal Shelter Assistance Program in Santa Barbara and Woods Humane Society in San Luis Obispo.

Social Media

Rumors/Confusion

In the last 48 hours we've had [two posts to the FEMA Harvey page](#) stating that renters cannot apply for assistance.

Sentiment.

- One small nonprofit disaster leader [posts a video on Facebook](#) that expresses frustration that in his view larger nonprofits have raised large amounts of funds but are not present in all areas affected by the disaster. He films a video that shows a tent with a survivor in it which he says she is sleeping in as he hangs an outdoor shower.

Community

- Volunteers from faith based groups [post about their volunteer efforts](#).
- There is a small amount of social media traffic [about churches suing FEMA for recovery assistance](#).
- As of 1800 yesterday, U.S. Rep., Brian Babin [will be hosting disaster recovery town hall meetings this upcoming week](#).
- A few people in Rockport were looking for clarity on what percentage the city pays back toward approved FEMA claims.
 - Others voiced their concern to find the answer.
 - [Some believe](#) the city pays either nothing or the difference if they go over.
- Local residents are continuing moderately suggesting their friends effected by Hurricane Harvey should apply for FEMA. [Example 1](#) [Example 2](#) [Example 3](#) [Example 4](#)
 - A few are simply stating to just apply, while some others are [sharing their stories](#) on how they applied and received an inspector, have been denied or have their housing extended.